Council Highlights: October, 1998

Executive Heads' Retreat launches fall season

The fall season got off to a productive start with an Executive Heads' Retreat, on [illegible]ember 28-29, at the residence of Robert Prichard, Chair of Council, and President, University of Toronto.

The retreat featured a roll-up-the-sleeves agenda as university presidents and two academic colleagues worked to develop a shared view of the environment as it pertains to postsecondary education; to understand government priorities and objectives for postsecondary education; and, ultimately, to establish consensus on advocacy priorities for the pre-election period.
The retreat began with an early evening gathering of participants, followed by a dinner meeting attended by six deputy ministers: Rita Burak, Secretary of the Cabinet; Dan Burns, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism; Ken Knox, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology; Veronica Lacey, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Training; David Lindsay, President and CEO, Ontario Jobs and Investment Board; and Michele Noble, Deputy Minister, Management Board Secretariat. The evening provided welcomed opportunities for discussion of university objectives as well as an exploration of government objectives from the standpoints of our guests' portfolios.

The second day began with a breakfast meeting with guest Dalton McGuinty, Leader of the Official Opposition. Howard Hampton, Leader of the New Democratic Party, joined in a working luncheon, and the day was rounded out with a visit from David Johnson, Minister of Education and Training. The participants of the retreat were encouraged by the commitment of guests toward ensuring the future well-being of the province's universities and students. It is hoped that this shared commitment will lead to thoughtful debate and a promise of strategic reinvestment in postsecondary education in the near future.

The retreat agenda also included a series of presentations and discussions, which resulted in agreement that COU would commission research into Ontarians' expectations of their university system in the future, and would undertake detailed analysis of the requirements and implications associated with these expectations, focusing on access, faculty, research, infrastructure and program innovation.

Experts share perspectives on public opinion

Michael Gourley, former Deputy Minister of Finance and now a Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Bob Richardson, Senior Vice-President of Angus Reid Group, shared their perspectives on public opinion relating to broad issues and universities in particular, at the Executive Heads' Retreat held on September 28-29. Building on the "Strategic Reinvestment" initiative launched last spring, COU is considering different approaches to advance the same objectives for strategic reinvestment: access, faculty, research, and infrastructure.

Preliminary thinking suggests the need for a forward-looking strategy that will reflect the government's emphasis on meeting public expectations, especially as they relate to access in 2003, the anticipated peak year of the double cohort.

Plans underway for a News Bureau

The Ontario Universities Public Affairs Council (OUPAC) will be working to develop a plan to introduce a News Bureau for Ontario universities. The idea behind the plan is to create and produce information on common messages and positions that support COU actions and that can

be shared in university newspapers, newsletters, alumni communications and other areas, where appropriate.

A committee of OUPAC representatives, including David Estok from The University of Western Ontario, Darlene Frampton from the University of Guelph, Gillian Howard from McMaster University, Sue Bloch-Nevitte from the University of Toronto and Arnice Cadieux from COU, will be working on the plan.

New appointment at COU Secretariat

Ken Snowdon will join the COU Secretariat as Vice-President, Policy and Analysis, effective December 1, 1998.

Ken brings to COU a keen understanding of the key issues facing Ontario universities, a lively interest in postsecondary research and policy analysis, and a strong working knowledge of institutional activities.

Ken has been a long-standing member of the Queen's University community. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the university and holds a Master of Public Administration from its School of Policy Studies. In the mid-70s, he began his career at Queen's, moving into progressively responsible positions at the university. In 1995, he was appointed Associate Vice-Principal (Planning). Currently, he is on secondment to the Ministry of Education and Training as the Senior University Advisor in the Universities Branch.

Ken will assume responsibility for the leadership of the Research, Analysis and Policy Division and will also become involved in broader issues and activities at COU.

Amendments to the Access to Opportunities Program (ATOP) approved

David Johnson, Minister of Education and Training, announced his approval of a set of amendments to the Access to Opportunities Program (ATOP) at a meeting with university presidents on September 29. The amendments -- the result of extensive consultation with COU -- will improve the conditions for participation in ATOP.

Under the amendments and in recognition of Waterloo's already high percentage of students enrolled in computer science and high-demand engineering programs, the University of Waterloo may participate by increasing its enrolment by 68.5%; universities may choose to participate under the pre-amendment rules and receive in-year funding, or choose to participate under the amendment rules and receive slip-year funding. Graduate enrolment growth up to 50% will also be eligible for funding.
Ministry officials have now issued final guidelines for the submission of ATOP plans.

Ontario College-University Transfer Guide up and running in December

The College-University Consortium Council (CUCC) has developed the Ontario College-University Transfer Guide, an electronic Web site with a searchable database that will be up and running in early December. The Web site will provide students, institutions and the general public with information about institutional credit-transfer policies and practices, and collaborative programs and articulation among Ontario's colleges and universities.

The Web site has been pilot-tested by colleges, universities and related associations as well as by prospective users in high schools. To date, 15 of 17 Ontario universities and the Ontario College of Art & Design and 13 of the province's 25 colleges have provided information on their

respective credit-transfer policies and collaborative programs. The Web site is also linked to the Web site of each institution and other related organizations.

Once completed, the Ontario College-University Transfer Guide Web site will be a comprehensive source of information on the diverse postsecondary collaborative learning opportunities available in Ontario.

Computer streamlines medical school applications

An estimated 90% of applicants submitted their entire application (including academic grades) for 1999 admission to Ontario's five medical schools on computer disk. The computerized version is not only much easier to complete than the paper application version, but it also reduces processing time and ensures that application data is received by universities in a more complete, orderly and consistent format. Preliminary counts indicate that the number of applications to the five medical schools this year is at least as high as last year -- about 3,500 applicants. With the Centre's implementation of a Web-based application system for all of its programs later this fall, it is expected that in the very near future the disk format will be replaced by an on-line Web system.

Business as usual for processing undergraduate applications

As recently reported in the media, the Ontario Universities' Application Centre is preparing to "staff-up" as necessary to process the undergraduate applications for university admission that might arrive late as a result of teaching interruptions in Ontario's high schools. The objective is to ensure that no applicants are disadvantaged in the application process and that the universities receive their application data and grades on schedule, as planned. The Centre expects to receive the bulk of the anticipated 55,000 applications from Ontario secondary schools by the deadline. In cases where the school or board officials contact the Centre for an extension, suitable arrangements will be made.

Task Force to address physician under-servicing in communities

At the request of the Ministry of Health, the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine has formed a Task Force on Rural-Northern Community Medical Education to address the chronic physician under-servicing problems in rural, northern and isolated parts of the province. The Task Force, chaired by Dr. James Rourke, professor in The University of Western Ontario's Department of Family Medicine and an international authority on rural medicine, hopes to prepare a policy framework that will integrate local programs with medical schools.

Working Group to advise Ministry on changes to nurse practitioner program

In the last issue, we had reported that the Ministry of Health was establishing a Working Group composed of representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Training, Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and Council of Ontario University Programs in Ontario (COUPN) to advise on changes to the Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Program. Since then, representatives have been named and include, for COUPN, Andrea Baumann from McMaster University and Beth Horsburgh from the University of Windsor, and for COU, Denise Alcock from the University of Ottawa and Martin England from the University of Toronto.

Jobs and prosperity focus of Premier's Conference

Whenever possible, presidents of Ontario universities have cleared their calendars to participate in the Premier's Conference on Jobs and Prosperity being held in their region. Seven conferences are scheduled in regions across Ontario between October and November, and feature four common themes: Preparing People for Tomorrow's Jobs; Winning in the New Global Economy; a regional Vision; and Creative Infrastructure to Support Growth and Competitiveness.

The conferences are part of a consultation process to develop strategies for job creation and economic growth, which is being spearheaded by the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. Conference participants include representatives from a cross-section of the community, including business, labour, academic and community leaders.

The following is a listing of the locations and dates of the Premier's Conferences, and of the participating universities:

National Capital/Ottawa Valley Region

Ottawa, October 15
Universities: Carleton University, University of Ottawa

Eastern Region

Kingston, October 19
Universities: Queen's University, Trent University

Southern Region

St. Catharines, October 22
Universities: Brock University, McMaster University

NorthEastern Region

Sault Ste. Marie, October 26
Universities: Laurentian University, Nipissing University

NorthWestern Region

Thunder Bay, November 6
Universities: Lakehead University

SouthWestern Region

London, November 20
Universities: The University of Western Ontario, University of Waterloo, University of Windsor, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Guelph

Central Region

Toronto, November 27
Universities: Ryerson Polytechnic University, University of Toronto, York University, Ontario College of Art & Design

Council endorses report on Prior Learning Assessment

At its October 23 meeting, Council accepted the report of the Working Group on Prior Learning

Assessment (PLA) and its recommendation that COU and member institutions endorse PLA and use the practice wherever appropriate.

Prior Learning Assessment uses challenge exams and portfolio assessments to determine and recognize learning acquired through experience and training received outside of the universities. The use of PLA is seen as an important advance in flexibility that will benefit adult learners and encourage their continued studies. It enables students who have learned through work or other experience to receive credit rather than being required to take courses that cover knowledge they already possess.

The Working Group was chaired by Dr. Claude Lajeunesse, President of Ryerson Polytechnic University, and its members included Dr. Ted Chase, Nipissing University; Monica Collins, University of Windsor; Ron Goldsmith, Ryerson Polytechnic University; Dr. William Jones, University of Windsor; Margaret Landstrom, University of Windsor; Gale Simko-Hatfield, University of Windsor; Dr. Ted Spence, York University; Prof. Sharon Taylor, Lakehead University; Dr. Alan Thomas, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; Dr. Alex Waugh, University of Toronto; Dr. Laura Selleck, COU; Murray Stinson, COU; Mary-Kay Whittaker, COU; and Dr. Norm Shulman, COU.

With funds provided by the Ministry of Education and Training, the Working Group helped support pilot projects on PLA at the University of Guelph, York, Windsor and Nipissing, as well as the PLA component of the nurse practitioner program centred at the University of Ottawa. It also conducted an information session on managing PLA and has provided a manual to assist those responsible for PLA.

The endorsement of PLA is seen as an important step toward greater flexibility in response to continued requests from adult learners and their employers. It also recognizes the reality and requirements of lifelong learning, which requires continued learning and skill acquisition through all stages of life.

Update on COU President's meetings and presentations

September and October (to date) have involved several meetings and presentations for new president, Ian Clark, as the academic year moves into full swing.

On September 2, COU President Ian Clark had his first official meeting with representatives of the Ontario Undergraduate Students' Alliance (OUSA) that included Andrew Boggs, Executive Director of OUSA, and Robin Stewart, Vice-President, Education. Ian and Andrew had met earlier in June when Ian sat in on a meeting with then-COU President Bonnie Patterson. On October 18, Ian attended the OUSA Assembly Meeting, held at Waterloo, to discuss the role of COU and opportunities for collaboration.

As noted in the last issue of ***COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS***, Ian continues to meet with various Executive Heads and university representatives and, in the last few weeks, has visited the campuses of McMaster University, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Guelph, Trent University and The University of Western Ontario.

Ian has had the opportunity to meet, and to discuss some of the themes addressed at the Executive Heads' Retreat, with the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS), Ontario Universities Public Affairs Council (OUPAC), Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR), Council on University Planning and Analysis (CUPA) and the Ontario Council on Student Affairs (OCSA).
He thoroughly enjoyed an afternoon visit to the Ontario Universities' Fair, co-ordinated by the Ontario Universities Registrars' Association (OURA) and involving the participation of all Ontario universities, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The three-day fair attracted 35,000 visitors.